

Sadhu and His Peregrinations

By Veeraswamy Krishnaraj

There were three brothers, a doctor, an engineer and a wanderer. The first two stayed in one place; the third one knew not where his next meal, his next transport, his next bed, his next travel companions would be. You might call him a troll, though intelligent, observant, compassionate and almost divine. He is a multilingual with an added facility to communicate with animals: He speaks Animalish. He is richly endowed with biomagnetism, with which he endears men and animals. He calls himself the Faunal-Lingual as opposed to banal nomenclature, whisperer. He can do all the animal noises known to man and animals, that too with intelligence and understanding. He knows all the nuances of animal-speak. Besides that, he could ferret out their likes, dislikes and other myriad emotions of man and animal, which humans never care about and willfully ignore to the detriment of man and animal. He knows his human and animal psychology in its complexities.

We all talk to God, animals, preverbal babies, comatose relatives in the hospitals, and ourselves. We know they may or may not listen and understand and yet we talk to people afflicted by alalia and other neurological conditions, not really expecting answers. We are very amusing in our speech with animations when we talk with babies; it always becomes clownish and something funny to look at but is deeply satisfying in the parent-child bonding, interaction and relationship. The baby talk has its own vocabulary. As we gabble, the baby burbles to our immense satisfaction.

Faunal-Lingual is a tight-fisted traveler. His needs are very few and so his travel Rupees if any goes a long way. He is not afraid to camp by a stream, in a shed, railway station, public park, low- budget rental, cave, temple..., anywhere he could rest his head and stretch his body. A stray dog gets on his scent and followed him wherever he goes. The dog learnt to stay away from people and animals when they do not like its presence.

The fortunetelling parrot

As he is walking down the Bazar Street, the fortunetelling parrot begs his attention. The man is sitting on a mat with the cage and the pictures of Siva, Vishnu, Lakshmi, Kali and Durga. The handler upon payment from the client feeds the bird a pumpkin seed, which the bird adroitly shells to eat the meat. The bird keeper calls the bird, to which the bird answers in the language of the keeper. It picks a card from a pile and hands it over to the fortune teller, who rewards the bird with a pittance of ripe mango. The bird saunters back into the cage on its own accord and the gate shuts behind it. The soothsayer reads the card and advises the fortune seeker. The cards have information about job, love, marriage, fertility, education, friendship, inheritance, rewards, death, birth, pilgrimage... He advises the client to go to the temple to seek remediation from god or goddess.

With permission from the bird keeper, the Sadhu speaks with the bird.

Sadhu: How are you doing? Do you like what you are doing?

Bird: I was once a free bird. This cruel man cast a net with nuts, seeds and raisins. I swooped down from my perch and started eating the goodies. When I had my fill, I could not escape and fly out of the net. I am forever separated from my mate. The man clips my flight wings and renders me flightless. During my training sessions, he had my foot tied down to the gate

of the cage. When I am not working, he keeps me in the cage. I hate the confinement of the cage, love to fly away and live with my own kind in the wild. The keeper treats me well, cleans my cage, talks to me kindly, and feeds me very well. I am getting adjusted to my lonely existence.

The Squirrel and the nuts

He talks to the three-striped palm squirrel, which is not afraid of him. He picks up a squirrel and gently runs his fingers on its back. He loves that gentle human touch.

Squirrel: My kind has raucous arguments with the dogs, cats and children... The larger animals seem to want to molest and or sometimes eat us. The children use slingshots to kill or maim us. They sometimes use nuts as projectiles. That is sick in my view. Thank god, we can climb up the trees before they can catch us. It was good living in the forest, where the food was plenteous. Now that we have migrated to towns, many of my kind die from run-over by cars.

Sadhu: Yes, that is the hazard of living in towns. Do you know that you are among very few animals which descend down the tree heads first? You can spot the danger on the ground, turned around and go up the tree. Do you have any problems?

Squirrel: Yes, the buried nuts start sprouting as the spring comes along. We end up starving and eating buds, which is not satisfying. I need to eat tons of nuts to breastfeed my blind, toothless and naked babies. I am happy to see the teeth erupt in the young so they can eat nuts like me. I heard of Rama who stroked his fingers on our species and thus gave us the three stripes for building the bridge to Sri Lanka to rescue his spouse.

The Donkey and the Onerous Work Load

In towns and villages, it a common sight to see donkeys carry bales of laundry. The Sadhu sees a donkey and a Dobhi (washerman) near a river. As the Dobhi is mercilessly beating the clothe on the flogging slab of a stone, wringing it, dipping it in the detergent solution and then again beating it to death, the Sadhu picks up a conversation with the donkey.

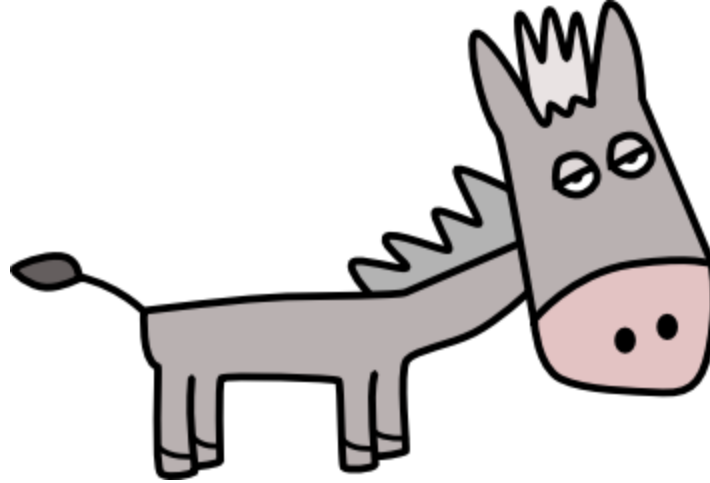
Sadhu: Dear donkey, how are you doing today?

The Donkey: Fine, thank you. As good as I can be. Thank god I am resting, while my master is slogging the piteous clothes to death on the stone. Certainly a small percentage of clothes are torn from the rigorous punishment they receive from him. You see I just finished eating tender grass that he brought. You came right on time. I am unlike the cows which need their time chewing the cuds. When it comes to nutrition, my boss gives me measured quantities of hay grain, salt... I have no complaints on that score.

Sadhu: You must be a happy donkey.

The Donkey: I am not happy about the other washerman who treats his beast of burden badly. He overloads my friend with a heavier bale of laundry, which I assume could break its back. It just simply does not move or simply collapses on the ground. It would not budge until the burden is lessened. Once it saw a snake and would not go forward, went backwards, kicked with the legs and raised dust. Its master beat my friend up because he does not see the snake. Such a stupid person serves as its master.

I am very accommodating to my boss because he knows and understands me. We go side by side. I am like an equal partner with my boss and part of the family. I even play with his children, who taught me play ball with my feet and muzzle. I am a quick learner. Once I brayed when there was a scorpion in the ballpark. My master appreciated my quick thinking and gave me a banana.



My friend had a sore on his back and told me about it. I grabbed the shirt of my master's child and showed him the sore. At once, my boss persuades the other man to take my friend to the Donkey Sanctuary for treatment.

The Crested Serpent Eagle (*Spilornis cheela*) and the Sadhu

The Eagle was flying over the canopy of the forest, as the Sadhu was half way towards it. The bird of prey enjoys eating small snakes, rats, mice... He flies over villages and cities, swoops down and steals snacks from the hands of children. (The author was one of its victims.) As the Sadhu is walking on a grassy path by the fields, the bird, seated on a rock, is tearing the flesh of a field rat that it caught recently. The Sadhu rests under a Banyan tree near the rock and waits to have an audience with the king of birds. The Sadhu approaches the bird, which flutters its wings but stays put, knowing the swami is man of peace.



The Sadhu: Greetings, King of birds. How do you do? You seemed to have had a good sumptuous meal.

The King of Birds: Sadhu, dispense with your niceties. You are a man of peace and a vegetarian. What do you have in common with me?

The Sadhu: You are right. One of your distant cousins serves as the mount for Lord Vishnu, whom I worship as my God. That is the connection.

The King of Birds: O I see. Last time I heard from my cousin Garuda, he told me that it dropped The Lord off in Pune when a snake on the ground made him hungry. The stranded Lord had to walk all the way to Kasi on foot.

The Sadhu: And yet the Lord did not fire him from his job but kept him. Such is the glory of a forgiving Lord. What is this fuss about your being the King of Birds. Do you hold court? How do you treat your spouse?

The King of Birds: Watch your words, Sadhu. You should not be too inquisitive with the affairs of the King. If you get too close to the king or the sun, you may be burnt; if you are too far away, you may be frozen. Keep the right distance.

The Sadhu: O King of Birds, I hear the words of wisdom loud and clear.

The King of Birds: My spouse and I build and defend the nest and my spouse incubates the egg. The nest is perched high on Indian-Laurel tree. We dine on live snakes and lizards that we see from our high perch.

He walks by the peanut fields with mounds of harvested fresh and crunchy raw peanuts, takes what is given by the farmer and feeds the birds and monkeys on his travels.

He sports a beard and wears clean clothes, which he washes in running streams and ponds. When he is in town, his very visage invites attention from men, women and children, who know he is a peaceful mendicant. They help him with money, food, and change of clothes. They feel they are blessed by helping him and by his presence. His sartorial splendor is limited to his loin cloth with a bare chest.

As he is walking down the dusty narrow lanes of the slum dwellers of a town, the ground-pecking chickens and small birds greet him but are too scared to stay their ground. Further away there are the green meadows with geese, ganders and goslings. The front of the huts at the entrance is shiny from daily cow dung treatment of the floor and decorated with Kolam, decorative figures and Mandalas drawn with rice flower. The ants in the neighborhood come foraging for the rice flower.

The Sadhu, the chickens and the Gander

The Sadhu tells the chickens not to scatter on his approach but to sit in a semicircle and have an audience with him.

Sadhu speaks in Fowl language. Why do you cackle and scatter as people approach you?

One less timid chicken: We are small, you are big. We are not afraid of the small birds. We have seen the foxes from the woods come and eat us. And so do the people. We are too heavy to fly like the kites; our wings are very modest. People, snakes and other animals steal our eggs. Most of my fellow birds do not even defend, when the housewife simply swipes our eggs from under our bellies on a daily basis. Some people do not like brown eggs. Some of us are hatchlings from them. The man of the house clips our beaks so we can't peck the hands of the housewife with our sharp beaks.



Sadhu: That is the fate of the weak and the powerless. That is your lot. Live for the day and leave the rest to fate.

He goes to the pond adjoining the green meadow. On the way, a gander honks, pecks on his foot and walks towards a deep hole. The intuitive Sadhu peeps into the hole lighted by the midday sun and sees fledglings flapping their tiny wings at the bottom and emitting muffled honks. At once he plunges his hands into the hole and rescues five goslings.



Sadhu: What happened?

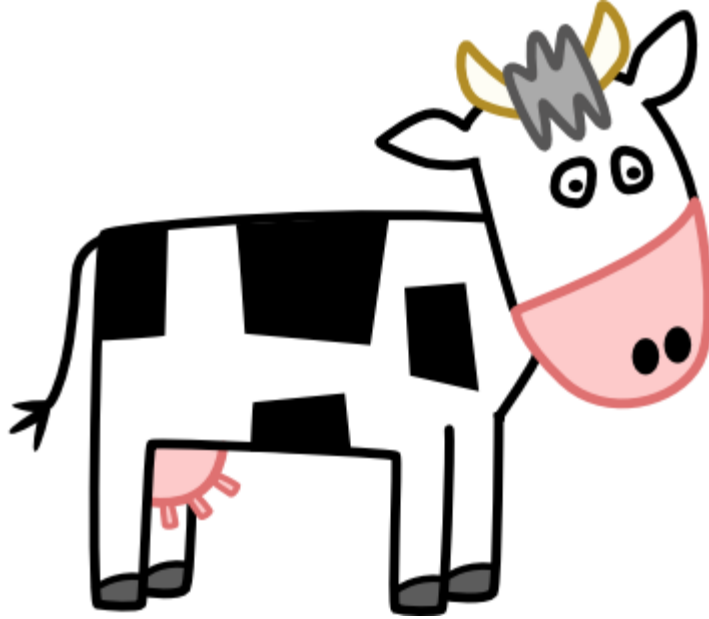
Gander: I babysit for the crech, when their mothers are away. The raucous goslings do not follow me but wander into the hole.

Sadhu: Do you have any enemies?

Gander: Yes, the village dogs. They always pick quarrels with us. They keep chasing us. There is no peace when they are around. Children and adults are fun to have around. They feed us all kinds of goodies. (The dog following the Sadhu stayed far away from the gander.)

The Sadhu, the Cow and the Cobra

Once he is traveling on a road by a meadow. The cows are grazing peacefully with the calves by their sides. The dog stays away at a distance. He stops and picks up a conversation with a cow in the language of the cow: Cowlsh.



Faunal-Lingual: How are things with you, cow and calf? Are you all happy?

The cow: We are as happy as it could be. We are sometimes bothered by the coyotes, foxes, stray dogs, feral dogs, cheetahs or any other carnivores. The cattle owner treats us well. He does not sell us to the abattoir, though we saw the butcher begging him to sell us in our old age, when we are no longer yielding milk or bearing calves.

As I was talking to the cow in Cowlish language, a cobra appeared nearby and demanded milk from the cow. The cobra threatened to bite the cow if it did not meet its demands. Faunal-Lingual came to the aid of the cow and spoke to the cobra.

Faunal-Lingual: (Speaking in Cobranese) I assure to give you a pot of milk if you do not bite the cow, its calf or me for that matter.

The cobra: Thank you Sadhu (a man of virtue and peace), I look up to Ganesa, Siva and Krishna, who all love the cows. Once I was in the midst of a stampede of a herd of cows. It was by the grace of gods, I escaped injury or death. I will be on my way if you give me a pot of milk.

The cow was anxious and wondering what transpired between the soft-spoken Sadhu and the cobra. The calf drew itself by the side of the mother, stopped grazing and looked at the baleful eyes of the cobra with a dancing hood.



The polyglot Sadhu sported benign eyes at the cow and the calf, which at once knew that they were safe. The sadhu shifted his linguistic gears and spoke in Cowlsh, which the cobra did not understand.

Sadhu: In Cowlsh. Dear cow, you and your calf are safe. I will bring a pot and please let me milk you so the cobra's needs are met.

The cobra had its fill of the milk and promptly slithered away in the grass, thanking the Sadhu and the cow. The cow and the calf regained their composure and thanked profusely in Cowlsh. The calf was babbling in Cowlsh about the potential disaster that never came, which the Sadhu understood.

The cow wanted to give the Sadhu something for his life-saving effort. It offered a pint of milk so he can quell his hunger until the next meals. The cow yielded a pint of milk, which the Sadhu boiled and drank.

The multilingual Sadhu was back on his peregrination. He was convinced that even the most poisonous and vicious being can be persuaded to give up its or his evil ways when the right path is shown. But he had a lingering doubt clinging to him.

Another day, another time. By happenstance, he walked into a sylvan forest where carnivores roamed. There were goats, sheep, elephants, tigers, and lions. There were enough ruminants in the jungle to satisfy the palate of the carnivores. The deer and antelopes were bouncing and leaping all over the place. There were many fruit-bearing trees in the jungle. It was the first time he savored many different fruits in his life. He lived in the forest for some time living on fruits, roots, herbs and edible leaves. It was very satisfying.

The Honeybees and the Sadhu

As he is sitting and meditating under a tree, something is dripping on his head and face. He looks up and sees a turgid honeycomb. By this time his loin cloth becomes wet with honey drip puddle on the forest floor. A few bees came over to him and started talking to him.

Honeybee 1: Hello Sadhu! Did you know that South Asia was the place where honeybees originated?

Sadhu: Thanks for the information. How is life in the forest?

Honeybee 2: I am the girl worker bee building, maintaining and cleaning the honeycomb, feeding the larvae, and caring for the Queen in and out of her palatial large cell and making honey. We live, work and die. We have the distinction to select larvae to become queens. We feed the Queen(s) exclusively Royal Jelly loaded with carbohydrates, proteins, vitamins and minerals secreted from the glands on the head of the young worker bees from the time she is a larva and follow her as she goes about laying the eggs, one in each cell. The queen's palace looks like a vertically placed peanut shell. The worker bees determine which fertilized eggs become queens and sustain many queens because they want to assure the survival of the hive. The dominant queen rules the hive. Others die or fly off with swarms. If there are multiple queens, the dominant queen may turn homicidal. Sometimes the old queen is allowed to live and lay eggs until it dies a natural death. When virgin queen emerges dominant, the mated queen is killed by workers and non-emergent queens are killed by the emergent queen. Virgin queens may take off with workers in a swarm to build new hives. Virgin queen and or old queen may make clarion piping call to workers to fight for her.



The Queen, the Drone and the Worker
 The Drone is Male; the rest Female.
 The Drone is Bug-eyed.
westmtnapiary.com

The girls having mother and fathers come out of fertilized eggs; the boys having mother only come from unfertilized eggs. You can look at the cell and know whether it is a girl, boy or queen. Boy's cell is bigger than girl's, queen's the biggest. There is no such thing as sex chromosomes in the honeybee kingdom.

The boys with bug-eyes hang out in Drone Congregation Area, to spot and mate with the queen. The queen revisits the area many days until her sperm sac (Spermetheca) is rippling with 6 million sperms, which would last for 2-6 years. If the queen stays a virgin because of weather conditions, she is dubbed as "drone layer" because she cannot beget female workers or a prospective queen to follow her but beget only boys. The bee colony will dwindle to nothing in the boys-only club.

By this time the worker bee becomes hungry, goes to the beehive, has a drink of honey and comes back to the Sadhu to continue her narrative.

Supersedure or supersession = the state of being superseded. This is replacement of the older queen with new queen, either done by the bee worker or apiarists. Sometimes the beekeepers mark the difficult-to identify queen on its back with harmless colored dyes.

The queen lays about 2000 eggs a day. My mother is the queen. When my mother dies for some reason, the fertilized egg already laid by my mother could be prompted to become the new queen and thus she becomes my sister, the queen. Normal boys are haploid coming from unfertilized eggs of my mother. We are diploid, a product of fertilized heterozygous egg or embryo. We eat the diploid male bees.

As a youngster, I worked as a nurse feeding larvae with Royal Jelly. Later, I did foraging and making honey, sanitation work, cleaning the cells of dead bees, guarding the honeycomb... I have odor receptors in my antennae. I can smell my sister and my mother the queen from a distance.

We eat honey for energy and pollen for protein; this honey-pollen diet is called bee bread.

When the enemy insect invades the honeycomb, we gang up on the insect, increase the ambient temperature for the insect, exhale a ton of CO₂ and thus induce heat exhaustion, oxygen deprivation, and CO₂ narcosis in the insect, which eventually dies.

The boy-drones with fatal attraction to the queen from other hives have all the fun before their death, if they get a chance to inseminate the queens. The bug-eyed boys are on the lookout for the queens on nuptial flights. The boys hang around in congregations. Once the transfer of the

sperm takes place (the sperm goes into the sac called Spermatheca of the queen.) from the drones to the queen, the boy's endophalus gets ripped off mercilessly and the emasculated drone male bee dives and falls precipitously and instantly dies. Hey, that is nature, but it is true and cruel. After successful in-flight insemination, the queen goes back to the hive, where the workers remove the leftover apparatus. If the queen continues her nuptial flight, the next paramour removes the apparatus and inseminates the queen. Coming back to the inseminated queen by multiple partner drones, the queen has the option to fertilize the eggs for a two to three year period to produce the working female bees or produce unfertilized eggs making drones. The hive has more workers than drones. We girls never ever lay eggs. The lucky larva fed Royal Jelly for the longest duration during the larval phase becomes the queen. We make that decision. The queen goes from cell to cell laying eggs; the larva comes out in 3-4 days and eats Royal Jelly given by the female workers. When the pupa emerges we close the cell with wax. The worker and drone larvae are fed Royal Jelly for 2 days. The queen larva continues to receive Royal Jelly until she spins the cocoon. For metamorphosis from egg to bee, the queen takes 16 days, the worker bees 21 days and the drones 24 days.

The queen lives for 3 to 4 years, the workers live for a few weeks, and the drones die soon after mating and never ever mate with in-house native queen. The ejaculation always makes a popping sound.

We concentrate the nectar and honey by repeated ingestions and regurgitations. For the bees to make one quart of honey, it takes 48,000 miles of flying. We make wax from abdominal glands. Girls have barbed stings, boys don't. Queen's sting is not barbed. We girls die soon after we sting an intruder, a human...; the sting apparatus detached from the body has the sting, venom sac and the musculature to pump the venom into the victim. The queen has no wax glands, but has ovaries and spermatheca which we working girls do not have.

The comb comes with layered apartments. The upper cells store honey; below that are pollen storage cells, brood-cells for workers and brood-cells for drones. The peanut-shaped palace-cell for the queen hangs from the lower edge of the hive.

Last but not the least is the neuroactive insecticide neonicotinoids used on crops adversely affecting the bees and responsible for CCD (Colony Collapse Disorder). This insecticide contaminates the nectar and pollen, which we carry to the honeycomb. These Neonics cause paralysis and death of the bees.

The Elephant and the Sadhu

One day a female elephant with its calf was passing by. Yes, he spoke Elephantish.

Sadhu: Hello Gaja (elephant, *Elephas maximus*). How are you doing? Do you know of any waterfall or pond for a shower or bath?



Photo: thehindu.com by Ritu Raj Konwar

Gaja: I know of a clean water pond, where you can bathe. I also know of a waterfall near

the pond. You could ride on me if you wish.

Sadhu: Thank you very much for your offer.

The elephant knelt on the ground instinctively and let the Sadhu climb on its back with the dog tagging along. They reached the pond and the Sadhu was taking a long-sought bath. At that moment they did not notice the tigress with cubs lapping up water about a quarter mile away. The tigress saw lunch in the elephant calf and approached the calf, which by instinct went under the body of its mother to hide. The mother elephant charged, trumpeted, picked up the tiger by its trunk and flung it into the pond right in the neighborhood of the Sadhu taking bath. The tigress was closing in on him.

Sadhu: In Tigerish. What is your intention?

Tigress: I am hungry. I want to eat you.

As the tigress was talking with the Sadhu, a croc surfaced from the depths and heard the conversation. The croc liked the Sadhu and lowered itself enough to let the Sadhu climb on its back. The croc previously swallowed a small deer and that may be why it was so obliging to the Sadhu. Or it could be Sadhu's charisma and message of peace which appealed to the croc.

The Croc did not talk to the tigress but splashed and whipped its tail so hard, the tail almost broke the neck of the tigress, which knowing its vulnerability in the water against a croc swam to the waiting cubs on the bank and ran away into the thick foliage. The Sadhu thanked the croc in Croconeese dialect and rode the crock to the opposite bank.

The Sadhu bid goodbye to the croc, crossed over by a land bridge and took leave of the elephant on the other bank and went on his way along the bank. There appeared a herd of Indian Bisons led by the matriarch. They had their fill of life-giving water and started making a retreat back into the woods. The Sadhu approached the matriarch and spoke in perfect Bisonese that he wants to take a ride on its back on the uphill terrain. Gladdening to hear someone speak Bisonese, the matriarch moved close to a ledge, wherefrom the Sadhu mounted the matriarch and held on to the horns. He held the in-curving horns in such way and moved them like the car wheel it appeared he was driving a bison-mobile. As they were nearing a meadow in the midst of the jungle, the hungry cubs were playing with each other and the mother tigress. The bison did not care and were ten in number of which two were calves. The tigress poised itself for a charge. The bison kept the calves in the back and formed a phalanx ready to take on the lone tigress. It was no match between the lone tigress and a phalanx of sturdy bison.



The Sadhu shouted to the tigress and told it to take on smaller animals. The tigress took off from the meadow along with the cubs. He had to spend a hungry night with growling cubs. The bison took him to the plateau of the mountain range and dismounted him. As a parting gift, the matriarch commanded a lactating mother to yield some milk to the Sadhu, which he accepted gladly.

The Sadhu and the Mountain Tribe

The Sadhu was enjoying the scenery from the top of the mountain. There were some goats and sheep tended by shepherds. It had been a long time since he saw human beings. There were hutments with children playing with the young animals. They are a community of about a few hundred people. They spoke hill country language of which he was very familiar. They do not marry close relatives, and the prospective man and wife are several degrees separated from each other. They are a robust hill tribe. They invited him in their midst and offered him all amenities they could afford. He learnt from them they communicated with the animals, departed ancestors, and mountain spirits all the time. They pointed to the sky as the abode of their departed ancestors. They were lactovegetarians; they never ate meat from the sheep or goats. They wore wool from shearing and skin from naturally-dead animals.

They had a mountain stream nearby to supply them with water. There were fruit trees of all kinds all around. They grew vegetables, medicinal herbs... The root vegetable supplied them the carbohydrates they needed. The sheep and goat supplied them the much needed milk protein. They had visitations from the carnivores. They held burning torches in a phalanx and made the carnivores to retreat, never to come back again. When a ruminant dies, they took the skin and cast away the carcass at the edge of the settlement, so the carnivores may eat it. They never lost a living ruminant, a friend, a relative or a child to a carnivore so far. They thank their ancestors for watching over them.

The Sadhu stayed with them for six months before his departure to other places. Their gods are the elements: water, fire, earth, sky and ether. Lightning and thunder are their other gods bringing them much needed rain. Their huts are made of a central pole of sturdy wood with the bamboo poles forming the roof and the walls, all tied together with coir. The wall and roof cover was a thatch made of straws, Palmyra leaves...all brought from the nearby forest foothills. The thatch is compact and impervious to water.

They worshipped hills, trees and animals. He introduced to them the concept of one God, who had many names and forms, both animate and inanimate. He called that monistic God Isvara.

They present him a sheep wool coat to ward off the chill of the night sky, as he takes leave of them.

The Sadhu and the Thuggees

The Sadhu walks down the mountain and reaches a village populated by thugs (Thuggees and Dacoits) whose profession is to steal from and kill the hapless. They are the most dangerous. They kill in the dead of night or broad daylight and bury the remains deep into the earth and keep the belongings. These thugs travel in threes, fours or fives, gain the confidence of the fellow traveler(s), kill them gratuitously and take their belongings. One thug distracts the traveler, the next two hold the feet and hands down, and the fourth one applies the ligature around the neck and tightens it until his life-breath ceases to move and his soul is taken away to

the netherworld by the minions of Yama, the god of death. The signature act is killing by ligature. The village is their home base. They may travel several hundred miles from their home base and return after a few months of rapacious and murderous spree. The loot, which they don't keep on their persons, is sent to the village through known messengers and partners in crime. Thus, they were never caught red-handed and always remain empty-handed except for the ligature. Many times they bury the stolen jewels deep in the forest by natural landmarks, only they know, away from the prying eyes. They kill even the most destitute because killing is their calling. They never kill anyone in the village itself: That is the honor among these thieves and killers.

In those days, people travel alone or in small groups to places of pilgrimage. Many lost their lives this way and there is no way of knowing how they disappeared. They somehow separate the individuals from the group and kill each one of them and take their possessions. The religious heads akin to Pope never travel alone; they have a retinue of guards with weapons, cooks, attendants, horses, elephants... They travel safe.

This is the way Acharyas (prelates) traveled in those days. Here is how Sringeri Guru Nrasimha Bharati traveled from Sringeri to Ramesvaram on January 23, 1868. Source: Sringeri Mutt.

Three Biradaris of horses.	100 Brahmins	100 Sudras
83 troops	10 daggers	25 Pikes
2 elephants	2 Palanquins	50 cows
2 Tonjons	8 Umbrellas	25 muskets
6 Chamaras	20 swords	10 horses

Birādārī = Caretaker, caste, brotherhood, community, kinship, fraternity.

Tonjon = an open sedan chair used in India and Ceylon and carried by a single pole on men's shoulders.

Chamara = Tanner.

The Sadhu walks into the village. Everything appears peaceful. That peace and quiet was disturbing to the polyglot. Everything is neat and clean as a prosperous village would look for an outsider. Something is up. What could be behind that enigmatic silence of the villagers? The Sadhu has nothing worthy on him and gives away his last possession, the wool coat to a villager as a gift. He satisfied the first condition: Shed all your possessions. How could he satisfy the second condition and live? Children do not cluster around him. They have been told not to befriend a stranger. The adults watch him go down the streets with glum faces. Someone offers to travel with him. He accepts his offer knowing full well the jig is up. How is he going to escape with his body and soul from the thug's ligature? Even if he refused the thug's generous but murderous offer, the thuggee would trail the Sadhu surreptitiously till death's door. The Sadhu's fate is in the hands of a professional killer- thug. Is it really so? Could there be a divine intervention? Could the Sadhu turn the table around to his favor? The wheels are turning in his cerebral mantle. Sadhu is the divine man; the thug is the animal-man, which is an animal in human form. A man who talks to animals and transforms them to a human dimension now faces a human in animal form. That is the paradox of life and living. A man can become divine in his outlook and behavior. How could an animal become divine before becoming human?

They travel side by side knowing each other's unspoken and unrevealed intentions, desires and goals. One (Sadhu, the divine man) has the stuff in him to transform an animal to a man and a man to a divine; the other has the animal in him to take the life of the divine man in human form. Is there a yet an unknown force that would set things right? Would that force take the

animal out of the thug, make him human and put him on a divine path? We will see what unfolds. Would the ligature hold its promise, though it is inanimate, uncompromising, efficacious and less than an animal? Does the ligature have a soul, as Hindus believe in the pervasion of soul in all things animate and inanimate? Where are his cohorts to assist the thug to hold down the Sadhu's limbs while the ligature goes to work at the hands of the thug? All these things are waiting for resolution.

The Sadhu and the thug travel by foot, cart... The thug is always on the lookout for his brothers-in-arms, who would help him in the commission of gratuitous murder of Sadhu. Sadhu is looking for ways he could convert the thug from natural brute to human domain. Divine domain is further down the path.

Sadhu wants to cut the bonds that kept the thug in animal domain, while at the same time he wants to escape the fury of an ever tightening ligature.

The thug and the Sadhu are in the company of pilgrims going north to a temple on the banks of Ganges. They decide they break their journey as the dusk is falling from the skies and slowly engulfing the earth below. The Sadhu lies down on a bed of grass in the company of fellow travelers, who are men, women and children walking the path towards a divine goal. The thug could not put into practice his finely honed skills on that night because there are kerosene lamps among the story-telling pilgrims under the moonless night. They also lit small fires here and there for roasting the dry peanuts in shells. They lie down in a circle with the feet in the center and the heads at the periphery. The women and children form separate circles.

The thug goes towards a bush to relieve himself and unknowingly falls into an abandoned well covered with overgrown weed. His ligature becomes loose from around his waist, caught by the twigs and branches, travels up to his neck and practically hangs him. The sound of his fall catches the attention of the pilgrims, who pull him out of the well and lay him on the dry grass. He talks with muffled voice, moans and groans but does not move his limbs. The birds start chirping, the crickets stopped their chorus, the orange sun peeps out of the horizon, the day breaks and all are awake. The embers are still alive. Sadhu and the pilgrims find the thug with four broken limbs. There is a village medic among the pilgrims who is familiar with setting fractures. He is one of the early pioneers of Puttur Kattu, specializing in setting fractures. Medicinal leaves obtained from nearby plants (paste from leaves of Senna tora) are applied on the fractured limbs which are immobilized with sticks and twigs after the crooked limbs are straightened by traction. The medic satisfies himself with the good bounding distal arterial pulses after he is done with his treatment. All these procedures are preceded with chewing and smoking of hashish by the fractured soul-body of the thug, first the soul and the next the body. Hashish for recreation and pain management is in plenteous supply among the pilgrims, just in case such things happen and warrant its use.

Puttur Kattu = The setting of the bone in the village of Puttur.

The pilgrims and the Sadhu prepare a makeshift gurney and carry him all the way to the temple. The Sadhu feeds him, gives him a sponge bath and takes care of all his daily needs. And yet his signature ligature is back around his waist, a grim reminder of his near death experience. He smiles more often, painfully raises his hands and palms towards heaven, and thanks the Sadhu and the pilgrims for their timely help and generosity. The Sadhu sees a transformation taking place in the thug. It appears that his soul has not hardened to an impervious rock. The hands raised to heavens with the help of Sadhu are losing gradually the blood stains from his previous egregious killings. His near death experience has lifted him from

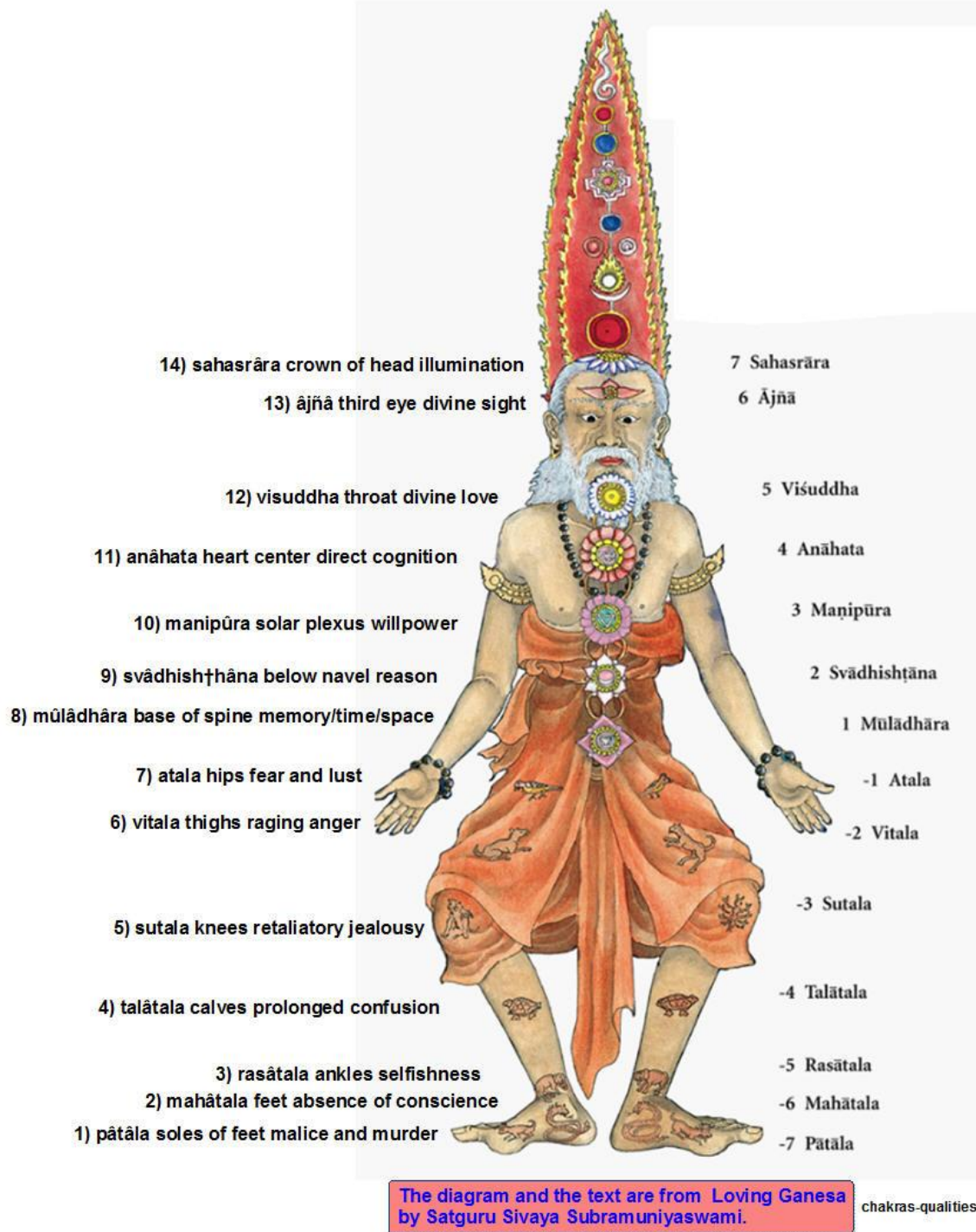
the abyss of a relentless murderer. The soul once impervious to human kindness is soaking up good vibrations, by which he kills the animal in him and resurrects the dormant humanism. He has become a human and is going on a salubrious path never-before imagined by him or his fellow traveler.

The Sadhu and the transformed thug stay in the temple town for six months, getting food from the pilgrims and local merchants. They sleep where they can and eat what they get to sustain the body. The Sadhu is ministering to his soul. Food is for the body; ethics are the food for the soul. The thug recovers completely. His body, mind, soul, speech and behavior are changing for the better. He is now a new person, ready for the ethical path free of ten afflictions of man. His body is back to its old self and his wretched soul transformed to a new self with vigor, beauty and grace. What else can you ask for from this degenerate soul blossoming into a flower of compassion, inner strength and empathy for the fellow human being? He could be the messenger to his village of dead souls and thriving flesh. One flower makes no spring. That is the beginning and a bed of flowers and a garden is in the near horizon, when his transformation becomes an endemic in his village.

Notes:

This is all about man moving from animal existence via human existence to ethical existence. Many equate ethics with divinity. The atheists and antitheists can live with ethics, while theists can live with divinity. Semantics are different but all share the same purport. No one is beyond redemption, given enough time, patience and remedy. Man of ethical nature living on air, water, donated food and no known shelter is man without the ten afflictions. He is a man with a mission, spreading goodwill among fellow travelers marching to the land of peace, serenity, and equal treatment of all beings.

Here is a diagram that depicts a human being from foot to crown. A foot level being is prone to malice and murder. A crown level being is an epitome of Spiritual Illumination.



The characters.

[Speaking ‘Animalish’](#) is having close and amiable rapport with all beings, men and animals.

[Faunal-Lingual](#) is the linguist who speaks to Fauna and is a polyglot.

[Parrots: People caught up in maladjusted criminal-justice system enjoy the stability in confinement.](#)

[A squirrel](#) is the man who saves for the future.

[Chickens: People at the mercy of others and subject to exploitation.](#)

[Ducks: Friendly people.](#)

[Birds and monkeys](#) are the ones who do not save for the future and live one day at a time.

[Peaceful mendicant](#) radiates peace, harmony and amiability.

[The cows:](#) men of peace, of giving nature, and not demanding.

[The coyotes, foxes, stray dogs, feral dogs, cheetahs or any other carnivores:](#) Entitlement seekers.

[The cattle owner:](#) A compassionate man.

[The Cobra](#): the naturally evil person, who could be controlled.

[Cobranese](#): The language of evil people.

[Ganesa, Siva and Krishna](#): The Criminal Justice System.

[Carnivores](#): Animals and people who take what they want without regard for ethics or law.

[Donkey](#): uncomplaining hard worker.

[Eagle](#). An icon of pride, strength and courage.

[Deer and antelopes](#): law abiding people who are taken advantage of by criminals.

[Elephant](#): the one who knows his strength and uses it judiciously.

[Taking bath](#): Physical purification as a step towards spiritual enlightenment.

[Tigress](#): the demanding usurper.

[The croc](#): the indiscriminate glutton extraordinaire.

[Riding on the back of the croc](#) is having control over indiscriminate and ravenous hunger.

[Goat and Buffalo](#) are the theriomorphic forms of lust and anger. People with anger and lust.

[Bisons](#): unpredictable, passionate and strong.

[Riding a buffalo](#) is having control over anger, an uphill battle.

[Shepherds](#): People, who have control over their anger, lust...

[Mountain tribes](#): Ethical people.

[Mountain spirits](#): Primitive religion.

[Riding an elephant](#): is having control over one's own strength.

[Whacking a tiger in water with the tail of a croc](#): is controlling the inner urges and showing man his vulnerability when he is out of his element.

Ref. Thuggees existed in India. Awareness of Thuggee problem was widely disseminated.

Travelers were more careful. The British recruited gang members to inform on their brethren.

Thuggee operations were systematically studied and documented and a pattern emerged. With that knowledge, the gangs were suppressed.

Some propose that Thuggee problem was invented by the then British Raj to control disparate parts and people of the country.

Thuggee and Dacoity Dept. was put in place with Civil servant [William Henry](#)

[Sleeman](#) becoming the superintendent in 1835 and later its Commissioner in 1839.

A contrarian view:

[Krishna Dutta](#), while reviewing Mike Dash's *Thug: the true story of India's murderous cult* in *The Independent*, argues, "In recent years, the revisionist view that thuggee was a British invention, a means to tighten their hold in the country, has been given credence in India, France and the US, but this well- researched book objectively questions that assertion."—Wikipedia.